

as worlds collide

When a house and its surroundings absorb one another, the result is close to magic



This page: The owners' passions for Samoa and an island ambience are evident in the rock coffee table and a connection with the lush greenery outdoors. **Opposite:** Beyond the deck, there's a small bridged stream and a virtual grotto of a garden, complete with dense bushes.

... just take a look. Words Cathrin Schaer Photography Gaelle Le Boulicaut



This page, top to bottom: The kitchen cupboards are clever, box-like plywood shelves containing Japanese ceramics; and the garden offers pockets of beauty like this gorgeous tableau of cane furniture. **Opposite.** Simple, but exotic, lounges are part of this eclectic home's charm.



The unusual indoor-outdoor wooden table probably says the most about this New Zealand home.

"That house with the indoor-outdoor table," says architect Andrew Lister, laughing. "That's what the place is known for. It seems to have become a bit of trademark." When you walk into the dining area of the small house, at Kare Kare beach, on the west coast near Auckland, it quickly becomes clear what he is talking about.

"It's great, isn't it?" says stylist and designer Emily Carter, who, together with partner Phil and their one-year-old daughter, lives in the house Lister renovated. She pushes open the sliding-glass door that forms one wall of her dining room to demonstrate. Now the two separate halves of the long, rectangular table — one outside and the other inside the house — could ostensibly be joined together.

One half sits on the cantilevered deck, surrounded by bushes. Look over the side of the deck and there is a gently rippled pond populated by waterlilies and goldfish. Beyond that is a virtual fairy grotto of a garden, complete with dense bushes, flowers, a gorgeous tableau of cane furniture and a small, bridged stream. Meanwhile, the other half of the dining table resides indoors in the black-, orange- and white-walled dining room.

Seen altogether, the dining room, with its rough hewn, homemade table and its slightly surreal decoration and colours, appears to be the perfect mix of modern and natural aesthetics, good design and an environmental consciousness. There's an honesty about the use of materials and a dignity to the renovation. Which is what this place is all about. The rest of the home provides further examples of the cultural, architectural mix that could feasibly be called Pacific Rim.

"Other people have told me that it has a really Pacific feel," says Lister, who owns the property together with his wife, film director Niki Caro. "It reminded Niki and me of Japan and Samoa, both places we really love. Niki's film *Memory and Desire* was about a Japanese couple, and we've both been to Samoa three times — so there's that island influence too."

The Japanese impact can be seen in the shoji-style screens that cover the kitchen cupboards, the clever plywood shelves containing Japanese ceramics and the feature wall painted wasabi green, as well as in the overall clean and almost minimal feel of the renovation.

The island and beach mood is then created by such elements as a ceiling covered in bamboo plywood (it looks like woven flax), a slab of rock used as a coffee table and the general connection with the lush greenery outdoors. Adding to that cultural combination are also some thoroughly modern elements, the kind of things one might see in an inner-city apartment rather than a coastal home. For instance, the



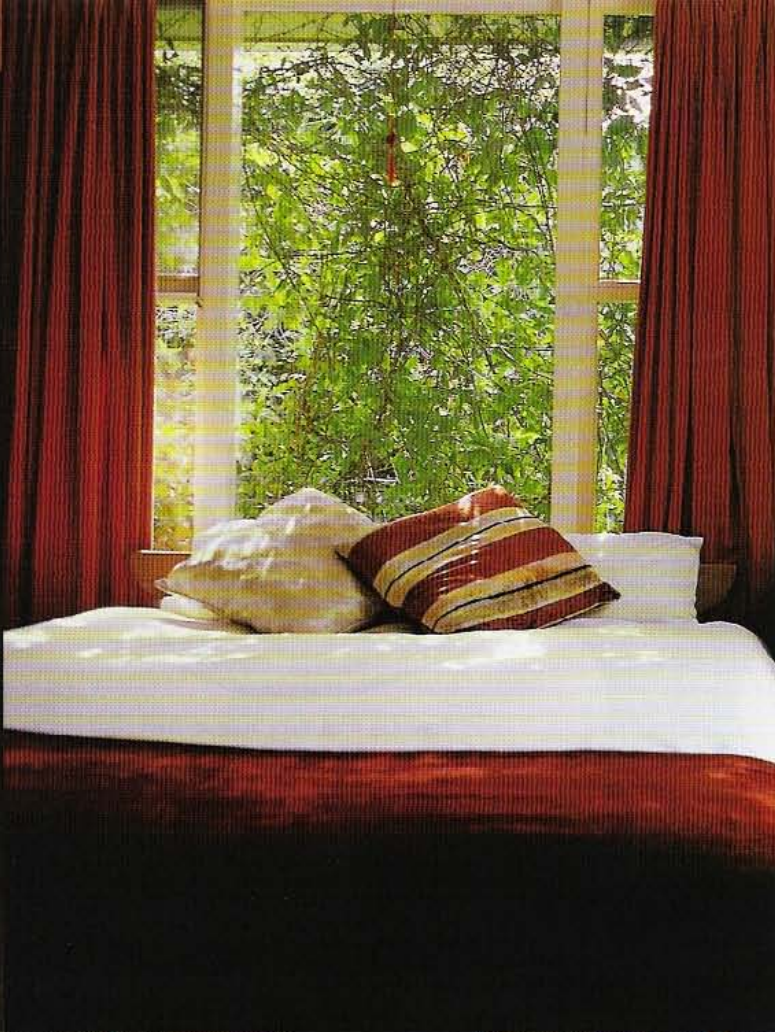
The East within – see the Japanese influence in the shoji screens, the artwork, lightshades and a feature wall painted wasabi green



This page: Some of the house's elements are thoroughly modern and more reminiscent of a smart inner-city apartment than a coastal home.

Opposite, from top: Indoor-outdoor living is evident in all rooms, with nature just an arm's reach away; Lister replaced an awkward, narrow cupboard with a bath sunken in the floor.

The sophisticated interior belies the modest budget the owners had at their fingertips. Now only the exterior reflects the home's weekender origins ...



1950s designer lamp hanging large from the ceiling and the simple, freestanding bookshelves at one end of the living area.

"According to Niki I could do anything I liked," Lister recalls. "Her only condition was that she have really big bookshelves," he adds with a laugh. Besides the clever fusion of various design aspects, the other rather remarkable aspect of the house is that Lister and Caro did most of the renovating themselves.

"When we first walked in, it was pretty far gone," he says. "It had a beautiful feeling about it because an old couple who were very much in love had lived here for a long time. But it was a pretty horrible place – the ceilings were wet and saggy, the kitchen was old and greasy, and it smelled a little strange."

But Lister and Caro, who had long wanted to move into the area, bought the place anyway, and weekends of hard work and trips to the hardware store began. "Basically we stripped the whole place," he explains. "Several interior walls were knocked down, in particular the wall that now features the inside-outside table. Previously, there had been no connection to the backyard, apart from one small window, so this whole wall became a glass door."

The bathroom was small and cramped and in order to put this space to better use, Lister replaced a long, narrow cupboard with a bath sunken into the floor.

Another of the living area walls is covered with a special black paint containing particles of silicone sand – this gives a solid effect and an interesting texture to the wall.

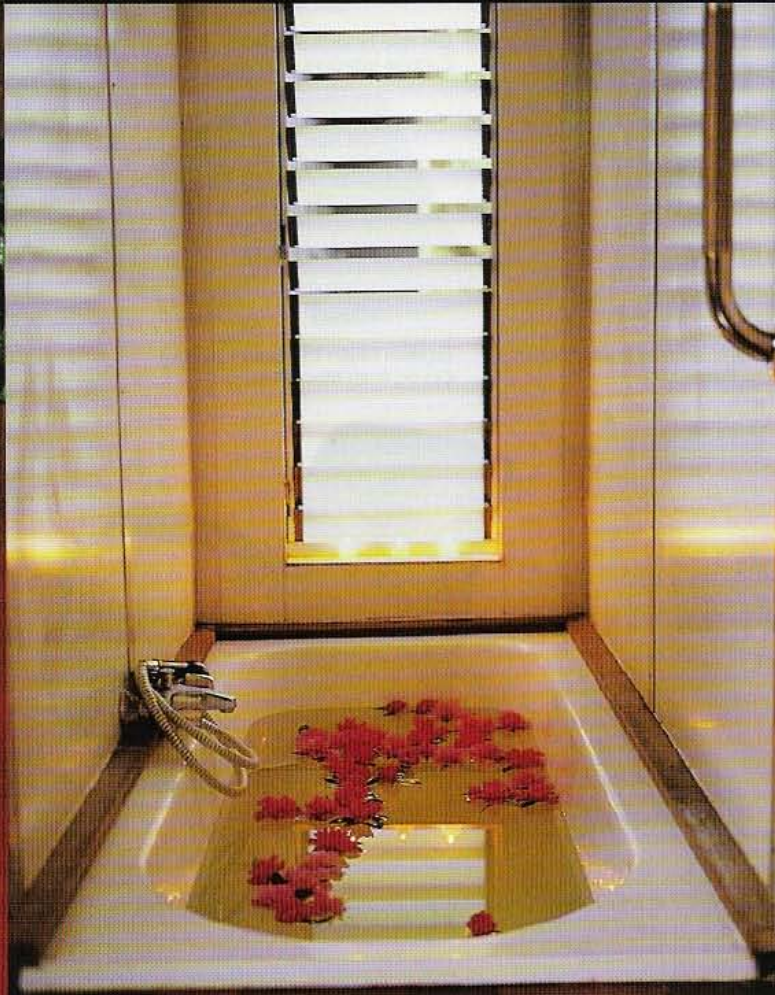
Today the look of the interior belies the fairly tight budget the couple were operating on. Only the exterior still appears to be some old holiday house. But Lister quite likes this camouflage.

It's quite possibly all about keeping that holiday mood to a property, something Lister, who now has his own architectural practice, is developing a reputation for.

"I do seem to be designing a lot of properties for people who live out here on the coast," he says, bemused. "I don't know why – maybe it's because I have an affinity for that sort of landscape. I design these places as beach houses, but people live in them full-time. I think it might be all about being aware of your surroundings, what's going on around you, and working to suit that.

"So I like that relaxed feeling, although I do always like to add something a little precarious, slightly surreal or interesting to a design."

Sadly, despite that affinity for the coast, after living in this house for two and a half years, Lister and Caro had to move back to the city due to work commitments. But, for now, others are enjoying their inspired renovation. ■





make the look your own

Add a dash of Pacific Rim panache to your home with these accessories



Falkland lamp by Bruno Munari, \$370, from FY2K.



Bowl, \$25, from Made in Japan; Ikara square plates, small \$7.50, and large \$9.95, from Freedom Furniture.



Old rose brooch, \$30, from Caravan Interiors.



Esteban Under the Leaves incense, \$43.95, from Moss River.



Maison de Vacances cushions, 30 x 50cm, \$175, and 40 x 80cm, \$225, both from Moss River.



1930s chrome armchair, \$1,150, from 20th Century.

This page: The magical, and famed, table that half-sits on the deck, while the other half resides indoors.

Opposite, from top: Carter's one-year-old child in her bedroom. Waterlilies straight from the garden pond.

Split personality – reflecting the duality of this New Zealand home, one half of the dining table sits on the deck, while the other extends into the living area